

CHAPTER 14

Ibrâhîm

(REVEALED AT MAKKAH: 7 *sections*; 52 *verses*)

The name of this chapter is taken from Ibrâhîm, whose prayer is mentioned in the sixth section. As this prayer speaks of the settling of Ismâ‘îl in the wilderness of Paran, the mention of it is meant to be a reminder of the truth of the Holy Prophet, whose advent was prophesied by Ibrâhîm.

The chapter opens with the statement that the Qur’ân is revealed with the object of leading human beings out of darkness into light, and goes on to show that the revelation given to Mûsâ, although given with a similar object, was for a particular people. The second section shows that Mûsâ also exhorted his people to accept the truth, but that all prophets had their message rejected at first. The third section maintains that in all cases opposition was at last destroyed, the Divine promise to help the prophet being brought to fulfillment and his powerful opponents rendered helpless. That truth is confirmed as the natural sequel is affirmed in the next section, and this is followed by one which shows that by rejecting truth man brings about his own ruin, for everything is made of service to human beings, which establishes the grand truth of Divine Unity. Here follows Ibrâhîm’s prayer expressing his disavowal of polytheism of every sort, with special reference to his descendants through Ismâ‘îl, for whom he also prayed. The concluding section states that the end of opposition to truth has always been, and will always be, failure.

The chapter belongs to the same period as the sister-chapters of this group.

SECTION 1: **Revelation dispels Darkness**

In the name of Allâh, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 *Alif, lâm, mîm*. A Book which We have revealed to you that you may bring forth men, by their *Rabb*'s permission, from darkness into light, to the way of the Mighty, the Praised One,

2 Of Allâh, Whose is whatever is in the *samâwât* and whatever is in the earth. And woe to the disbelievers for the severe chastisement!

3 Those who love this world's life more than the Hereafter, and turn away from Allâh's path, and would have it crooked. Those are far astray.

4 And We sent no messenger but with the language of his people, so that he might explain to them clearly.^a Then Allâh leaves in error whom He pleases and He guides whom He pleases. And He is the Mighty, the Wise.

5 And certainly We sent Mûsâ with Our messages, saying: Bring forth thy people from darkness into light and remind them of the days of Allâh.^a In this are surely signs for every steadfast, grateful one.

4a. In 7:158 we have: "Say: O mankind, surely I am the Messenger of Allâh to you all, of Him, Whose is the kingdom of the *samâwât* and the earth". A similar statement is made in 34:28: "And We have not sent thee but as a bearer of good news and as a warner to all mankind". In the verse under discussion nothing is said about the extent of the mission of the Holy Prophet. All that is said here is that every prophet is sent with the language of his people, not that his people, or the nation to which he belongs, are the only people to whom he is required to deliver the message. And the reason for sending a prophet with the language of a people is stated to be that he may explain to his people, because it is his people, who are the first recipients of his message.

5a. *Ayyâm-Allâh* is explained as meaning the *favours of Allâh* (*Tâj al-'Arûs* (Dictionary), by *Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faïd Murtaḍâ*). The use of the word in a similar sense is well known in Arabic literature, in which *Ayyâm al-'Arab*, or *the days of the Arabs*, is used for the conflicts of the Arabs. Hence, as a conflict is a source of blessings for the conqueror and a source of distress for the vanquished, *the days of Allâh* signify *His merciful dealings with the righteous and His punishment of the wicked*.

6 And when Mûsâ said to his people: Call to mind Allâh's favour to you, when He delivered you from Pharaoh's people, who subjected you to severe torment, and slew your sons and spared your women. And therein was a great trial from your *Rabb*.

SECTION 2: Truth is rejected first

7 And when your *Rabb* made it known: If you are grateful, I will give you more, and if you are ungrateful, My chastisement is truly severe.

8 And Moses said, 'If you are ungrateful, you and all those on earth, then Allâh is surely Self-sufficient, Praised.

9 Has not the account reached you of those before you, of the people of Nûh and 'Âd and Thamûd — and those after them? None knows them but Allâh.^a Their messengers came to them with clear arguments, but they thrust their hands into their mouths^b and said: We deny that with which you are sent, and surely we are in serious doubt as to that to which you invite us.^c

9a. The Qur'ân does not claim to give a history of all the prophets; see 4:164 and 40:78. The statement made here is much wider. It is claimed that no other book mentions them all; only Allâh knows them. In fact, the Bible does not contain more than a mangled account of some of the prophets of a single nation.

9b. *When a human does not return an answer, being unable to do so, and withholds, he thrusts his hand into his mouth* (*Bahr al-Muhîṭ* (Commentary), by Imâm Athîr al-Dîn Abû 'Abd Allâh Abû Hayyân al-Undlusî). Or, as the majority of the commentators agree, the meaning may be, *they bit their hands* by reason of rage; compare 3:119. Or the meaning may simply be that the disbelievers put their hands into the mouths of the messengers to silence them.

10 Their messengers said: Is there doubt about Allâh, the Maker of the samâwât and the earth? He invites you to forgive you your faults and to respite you till an appointed term. They said: You are nothing but mortals like us; you wish to turn us away from that which our fathers used to worship; so bring us clear authority.

11 Their messengers said to them: We are nothing but mortals like yourselves, but Allâh bestows (His) favours on whom He pleases of His servants. And it is not for us to bring you an authority, except by Allâh's permission. And on Allâh let the believers rely.

12 And why should we not rely on Allâh? And He has indeed guided us in our ways. And we would certainly bear with patience your persecution of us. And on Allâh should the reliant rely.

SECTION 3: Opposition is at last destroyed

13 And those who disbelieved said to their messengers: We will certainly drive you out of our land, unless you come back into our religion. ^a So their *Rabb* revealed to them: We shall certainly destroy the wrongdoers,

9c. The general statements made with regard to the messengers and the treatment of their people in this and the following section. While essentially true with regard to messengers generally, are particularly made in reference to the mission of the Prophet Muḥammad, the determined opposition and enmity of his people, their turning him out of the city, and their final discomfiture.

13a. This is no doubt equally a description of what the Holy Prophet was suffering at the hands of his enemies.

14 And We shall certainly settle you in the land after them. This is for him who fears standing in My presence and fears My threat.^a

15 And they sought judgment, and every insolent opposer was disappointed:

16 Hell is before him and he is given to drink of boiling water;^a

17 He drinks it little by little and is not able to swallow it; and death^a comes to him from every quarter, yet he dies not. And before him is vehement chastisement.

18 The parable of those who disbelieve in their *Rabb*: Their works are as ashes on which the wind blows hard on a stormy day. They have no power over ought they have earned. That is straying far away.

19 See you not that Allâh created the *samâwât* and the earth with truth? If He pleases, He will take you away and bring a new creation,

20 And that is not difficult for Allâh.^a

14a. The prophecy of the final triumph of the Holy Prophet and of the utter discomfiture and overthrow of the power of his opponents is of very frequent occurrence in the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân; here, too, it is expressed in the clearest words. The opponents are told that they may expel the Prophet, but there was not the least doubt, that he would ultimately come back as a conqueror, and be made the ruler in the land after their power was crushed. This verse contains, in fact, a very clear prophecy of the flight of the Holy Prophet from Makkah and of his re-entry into that city as a conqueror and ruler.

16a. The Arabic word *Ṣadîd* is translated variously as *pus*, *filthy water*, *hot* or *boiling water* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane).

17a. *Death* or *maut* here means not cessation of life, but *grief* or *distress* (*Al-Mufradât fî Ḡharîb al-Qur'ân* (Dictionary of Qur'ân), by Shaiḵh Abu-l-Qâsim Al-Husain *al-Râghib* al-Isfahânî), sufficient to cause death. He experiences, as it were, the pangs of death, but death, which would end all distress, does not come to him.

20a. Verses 18–20 are again prophetic. Verse 18 states that all the exertions of the opponents against the Prophet will be useless, while verses 19 and 20 warn the disbelievers that their power will come to an end and another people will take their place.

21 And they will all come forth to Allâh, then the weak will say to those who were proud: We were your followers, can you then avert from us ought of the chastisement of Allâh? They will say, 'If Allâh had guided us, we would have guided you. It is the same to us whether we cry or bear patiently; there is no escape for us.

SECTION 4: Truth is confirmed

22 And the shaitân ^a will say, when the matter is decided: Surely Allâh promised you a promise of truth, and I promised you, then failed you. ^b And I had no authority over you, except that I called you and you obeyed me; ^c so blame me not but blame yourselves. I cannot come to your help, nor can you come to my help. I deny your associating me with Allâh before. ^d Surely for the unjust is a painful chastisement.

23 And those who believe and do good are made to enter Gardens, wherein flow rivers, abiding therein by their *Rabb*'s permission. Their greeting therein is, Peace!

24 Seest thou not how Allâh sets forth a parable of a good word as a good tree, whose root is firm and whose branches are high, ^a

22a. The shaitân mentioned in this verse, is none other than the proud misleader of the preceding one. Compare also 37:30, where the very words *we had no authority over you* are put into the mouth of the leaders of evil from among human beings.

22b. Whenever a person is misled into an evil deed, he finds in the end that the promise of a good consequence for an evil deed was only a deception. Compare 4:120 and 17:64.

22c. The shaitân or the leader in evil, only points out an evil way, and the evildoer follows that way.

22d. Compare 35:14. An alternative significance is *I disbelieved because you associated me with Allâh*; in other words, the leaders disbelieve because their followers lead them by their flattery to think that they are worthy of being obeyed and followed.

25 Yielding its fruit in every season by the permission of its *Rabb*? And Allâh sets forth parables for people that they may be mindful.

26 And the parable of an evil word is as an evil tree pulled up from the earth's surface; it has no stability.^a

27 Allâh confirms those who believe with the sure word in this world's life and in the Hereafter; and Allâh leaves the wrongdoers in error, - and Allâh does what He pleases.^a

SECTION 5: Human being's Injustice in rejecting Truth

28 Seest thou not those who change Allâh's favour for disbelief ^a and make their people to alight in the abode of perdition —

24a. The parable likening a good word to a good tree follows immediately a description of the final abode of those who do good, which is repeatedly described in the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân as being a Garden or Gardens wherein rivers flow. This gives us a clue to the real nature of paradise. A good word is like a good tree which gives its fruit in every season, and therefore the fruits which a man will find in paradise, ever ready and within his reach, are only the fruits of his own good deeds. The trees of paradise are in fact human being's own good deeds, which have grown into trees, bearing a fruit, which is an embodiment of the religious fruits of the good deeds of this life. It should also be noted that, as good deeds are likened to fruit-bearing trees, faith is likened to water repeatedly in the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân, being the source of physical life. It is for this reason that, just as the righteous are always spoken of as being those who *believe* and *do good*. So is paradise always described as being a *Garden* in which *rivers* flow, the *rivers* corresponding to *faith* and the *trees* of the Garden corresponding to the *good* which a human being does. By the *kalimah* (word) is meant *a thing*, or *an affair* or *a matter*, because every matter is termed a *kalimah*, whether it is a word or a deed (Al-Mufradât fî *Gharîb al-Qur'ân* (Dictionary of Qur'ân), by Shaikh Abu-l-Qâsim Al-Husain al-Râghib al-Isfahânî).

26a. The evil deed is likened to a tree whose roots do not go down into the earth, and in whose case, therefore, the process of nutrition must stop. Therefore an evil deed does not prosper and cannot bear any fruit.

27a. Allâh does what He pleases, but it is the *wrongdoers* only, whom He leaves in error. The immediate cause of their going astray is their own iniquity.

28a. They reject Allâh's favour, the Revelation, which aims at making them a great and exalted people, and adopt disbelief in its place.

29 Hell. They will burn in it. And an evil place it is to settle in!

30 And they set up equals with Allâh to lead astray from His path. Say, ‘Enjoy yourselves, for surely your return is to the Fire.

31 Tell My servants who believe to keep up prayer and spend out of what We have given them, secretly and openly, before the coming of the day in which there is no bartering, nor befriending.

32 Allâh is He Who created the *samâwât* and the earth and sent down water from the clouds, then brought forth with it fruits as a sustenance for you, and He has made the ships subservient to you to run their course in the sea by His command, and He has made the rivers of service to you.^a

33 And He has made of service to you the sun and the moon, pursuing their courses; and He has made subservient to you the night and the day.

34 And He gives you of all you ask of Him. And if you count Allâh’s favours, you will not be able to number them. Surely human beings are very unjust, very ungrateful.

SECTION 6: **Ibrâhîm’s Prayer**

35 And when Abraham said: My *Rabb*, make this city secure, and save me and my sons from worshipping idols. ^a

32a. The whole of creation is here, and in the next verse, declared to be made of service to human beings, to show their high place in creation. How much then, does human beings degrade themselves by bowing before and worshipping things, which were made to serve him!

36 My *Rabb*, surely they have led many human beings astray.^a So whoever follows me, he is surely of me; and whoever disobeys me, Thou surely art Forgiving, Merciful.^b

37 Our *Rabb*, I have settled a part of my offspring^a in a valley unproductive of fruit near Thy Sacred House, our *Rabb*, that they may keep up prayer; so make the hearts of some people yearn towards them, and provide them with fruits; haply they may be grateful.

38 Our *Rabb*, surely You know what we hide and what we proclaim. And nothing is hidden from Allâh, either in the earth, or in the *samâ*'.

35a. That idolatry received a deathblow from the hands of one of Ibrâhîm's descendant shows that Ibrâhîm's prayer was not in vain. In fact, if idolatry is being swept off from the face of the earth, it is due only to Ibrâhîm and his descendants.

36a. Idols do not actually lead men astray, but as it is on account of them that people go astray, they are described as causing men to go astray.

36b. The prayer of Ibrâhîm is in fact the prayer of the Holy Prophet and illustrates the breadth of his view. Those who follow him are, of course, his own, but he does not reject even those who disobey him, for he prays for Allâh's mercy and protection even for them.

37a. According to the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân, Ibrâhîm brought Ismâ'îl (and his mother) to Arabia and settled them there. The story of the casting forth of Hâjirah and Ismâ'îl in the wilderness of Beer-sheba is thus not accepted. There are some details given in a hadîth by Ibn 'Abbas (Bukhari 60:9). According to this hadîth, Ibrâhîm brought Hâjirah and Ismâ'îl, and settled them near the ruins of the Sacred House, the Ka'bah. This, as the hadîth states, was done under a Divine commandment. For when Ibrâhîm was going back, on leaving them both in this wilderness, where there was no town at this time, Hâjirah asked him, is it by Allâh's commandment that thou art doing this? Ibrâhîm's reply was, yes. Then said Hâjirah: "Allâh will not leave us to perish". It is further stated that, when no water was left with her, Hâjirah ran to and fro, between the Safâ and the Marwah, to find out if there was any caravan going that way. It was on this occasion that she saw a *malik*, who pointed to her a place where she could find water. This was the place known now as Zamzam. It was due to this water that some people settled there. Even the Bible accepts that Ismâ'îl's descendants settled in Arabia.

39 Praise be to Allâh, Who has given me, in old age, Ismâ'îl and Ishâq! Surely my *Rabb* is the Hearer of prayer.

40 My *Rabb*, make me keep up prayer and from my offspring (too), our *Rabb*, and accept my prayer.

41 Our *Rabb*, grant me protection and my parents and the believers on the day when the reckoning comes to pass.

SECTION 7: The End of Opposition

42 And think not Allâh to be heedless of what the unjust do. He only respites them to a day when the eyes will stare (in terror),^a

43 Hastening forward, their heads upraised their gaze not returning to them, and their hearts vacant.^a

44 And warn people of a day when the chastisement will come to them, then the wrongdoers will say: Our *Rabb*, respite us to a near term, we will respond to Thy call and follow the messengers. Did you not swear before that there will be no passing away for you?

45 And you dwell in the abodes of those who wronged themselves, and it is clear to you how We dealt with them and We made (them) examples for you.

42a. The expression indicates a state of intense terror, in which one is unable even to wink the eye.

43a. The striking terror into the hearts of those who opposed the Prophet was witnessed in this very life, when the Prophet advanced on Makkah. The vacancy or blankness of the heart indicates a state of great terror.

46 And they have indeed planned their plan,^a and their plan is with Allâh,^b though their plan is such that the mountains should be moved thereby.

47 So think not that Allâh will fail in His promise to His messengers. Surely Allâh is Mighty, the *Rabb* of retribution.

48 On the day when the earth will be changed into a different earth, and the *samâwât* (as well),^a and they will come forth to Allâh, the One, the Supreme.

49 And thou wilt see the guilty on that day linked together in chains^a.

50 Their shirts made of pitch, and fire covering their faces,

51 That Allâh may repay each *nafs* what it has earned. Surely Allâh is Swift in reckoning.

52 This is a message for the people and that they may be warned thereby, and that they may know that He is One Deity, and that human beings of understanding may mind.

46a. The reference is to the plan of the Quraish to put an end to the Prophet's life, when he was left almost alone in Makkah.

46b. The words *their plan is with Allâh* signify that Allâh, Who will make it ineffective, controls, their plan. A wonderful prophesy indeed in the mouth of a person whose only chance of saving himself now lay in escaping from his enemies, while they were taking every precaution not to allow him to escape, having decided to put him to death! See 8:30, 998, where these plans are detailed.

48a. The transformation wrought by the Holy Prophet no doubt changed the earth into a different earth and the *samâ'* into a new *samâ'*. The Arabia at the birth of the Prophet was not the Arabia at his death. Beliefs, usages, and practices, which had baffled all attempts at reformation for centuries, were swept away, and the ignorant, superstitious, and warring tribes had become a single nation, holding aloft the torch of knowledge and civilization to the whole world. Idolatry was blotted out of existence so completely that no vestige of it could be found among a people who had remained addicted to it for centuries. And that great change must now come over the whole world. But the religious resurrection is only an indication of the great day of Resurrection.

49a. The powerful opponents of the Prophet were brought before him linked together in chains in this very life, at the battle of Badr. These promises were fulfilled in this life to show that they were equally true as regards the next.